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HAMILTON FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting 2019 JAN 11 AM 11 19
November 28, 2018

Members Present: Darcy Dale, John Pruellage, Phil Stearns (Chair), Nick Tensen, and David Wanger.

This Hamilton Finance and Advisory Committee meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm at the Council on Aging Meeting Room.

Public Comment

Presentation by Council on Aging Director, Mary Beth Lawton. Senior Programming Initiative and Update.

Mary Beth Lawton said David Wanger had attended a Council on Aging (COA) meeting and asked Ms. Lawton to attend the FinCom meeting. The COA had been discussing an age-friendly community initiative that had been supported by the Commonwealth of MA. The concept was started by the World Health Organization. Ms. Lawton explained that every 15 seconds, 100 people were diagnosed with dementia or Alzheimer's disease. Public safety employees had been trained how to work with individuals in the community who had been impacted by the diseases. Governor Baker was noted as being a huge supporter and when the State took funding away from senior affordable housing initiative to move toward family housing, they compensated by adding this dementia-friendly community initiative.

Mary Beth Lawton explained the initiative broke from how a Master Plan was devoted to understanding what a town knew about itself and identified areas where the town needed to pay attention, such as transportation, work, social, housing, volunteerism, employment, recreation, and handicapped accessibility. The town would need to ask itself what it needed to do to be a better community. The plan would create a document that would define where the town was at, what goals were established, a vision statement, a mission statement, and determine where the town wanted to see itself in one, three, five, and ten years. Ms. Lawton said the document would define how seniors would be able to stay in town or how they could move back to town. According to Ms. Lawton, those who were obstructing change would either pass on or pass through town and the door would be open to move forward because goals had been defined.

Mary Beth Lawton referred to the Compact that the Town had signed with MA for best

practices, which allowed funding for the Finance Director to create financial policies. The fund gave \$23,000 to towns either every other year or twice a year. Work would be conducted by the Donahue Institute or UMass Boston. Salem, which had an age-friendly community had conducted a town-wide survey and received public input. Wenham had also begun the process with their listening time being conducted currently. Ms. Lawton proposed a more aggressive plan by using the \$25,000 of Compact funds to do the survey and use another \$25,000 as seed money to begin the planning process.

The Town Manager had been given a list of important tasks by the Selectmen and planning for an age-friendly community was not on the list. Scott Maddern, who originally was anxious to have the initiative accomplished had taken a step back. Mary Beth Lawton said the funding could not be requested by multiple departments and would involve the support of the Town Manager and the Selectmen with paper work being completed after their approval. Best practice dollars would be funded for the 12 to 13 modes listed within the Compact. Ms. Lawton speculated that the Planning Department or Town Hall renovations might be items to be completed with funding from the Compact. Karen Polito was the point person. It was assumed that the financial policies had been funded two years earlier leaving funding available as of July 1, 2018.

Mary Beth Lawton said she had intended to approach Scott Maddern and Joe Domelowicz to inform them what the funding would be used for and ask for their support. Ms. Lawton would come to the Selectmen with someone from the Alzheimer's Association or other appropriate groups for a presentation. Ms. Lawton would speak with Jim Reynolds in Wenham and duplicate his process. Ms. Lawton indicated that the COA was frequently ignored because people did not understand what the COA did or the level of social work provided. According to Ms. Lawton, 1,946 seniors (27% of the town) were currently 60 and over live in Hamilton. Ms. Lawton indicated that she was obtaining a Municipal Council on Aging certificate, which would allow the community to garner dollars that would be available to them as well as allowing the Council on Aging center to be accredited.

While Mary Beth Lawton wanted to be able to speak in front of the Selectmen, she believed she should meet with Joe Domelowicz first. Ms. Lawton hoped the FinCom would speak up at the meeting in support of her request. Options such as having the FinCom write a letter of support were considered. In response to John Pruellage's question how the Compact funds could be spent, Ms. Lawton responded that she was unable to ask. Phil Stearns noted that the Town needed to determine priorities. Mr. Stearns suggested that Ms. Lawton speak during the Selectmen's public discussion period, but Ms. Lawton said she would not do so. Ms. Lawton said that if she had

discussed the topic with a positive response, she would have sent an e-mail to the Selectmen, but she had not been encouraged to do so.

Mary Beth Lawton reiterated that there were more seniors in town than children in the school system but there was no one lobbying for them. Phil Stearns wanted to let the Schools know about the senior versus student numbers but did not feel comfortable writing a letter from the FinCom in support of the initiative. Mr. Stearns suggested that Ms. Lawton write a letter summarizing the case to the Town Manager, the Selectmen, and the Fincom, which would give them leverage to talk about it with the Town Manager. Mr. Stearns wanted to have a decision made so funds were not left untapped. Ms. Lawton said if she were to do that, she would not be following protocol but that a different approach could be taken as David Wanger had attended the meeting and asked her to come to the FinCom. Mr. Pruellage thought the topic would come up during budget discussions. Ms. Lawton responded that the subject came up a few years ago during the Department Heads bi-annual presentations to the Selectmen. Ms. Lawton suggested that current protocol would allow for a FinCom member to have a casual talk with the Town Manager noting that Ms. Lawton had been in front of the FinCom after David Wanger had attended one of the meetings when senior-friendly communities had been discussed. The FinCom would say the concept was interesting and hoped dialogue would be encouraged. The FinCom would be able to gain a sense of where the Town Manager would want to go on the issue.

Mary Beth Lawton reminded members that the topic was at the bottom of items that the Town Manager needed to accomplish. David Wanger noted that it was his sense was that the Chairman of the Selectmen was a strong supporter of the COA and its programs and wondered why it was at the bottom of topics to be accomplished. Ms. Lawton recalled that Scott Maddern had been asked about the topics and did not have a response.

Phil Stearns said he could write a note to the Town Manager and send a copy to Shawn Farrell but Mary Beth Lawton said that after she determined protocol, she would approach Shawn Farrell due to his continued concern for the COA. Mr. Farrell had developed a survey with 800 out of 8,000 respondents, which David Wanger thought could be used as a template for mobilizing individuals to get the momentum of change going. While Ms. Lawton did not believe she had a mechanism to mobilize her constituency, it was recalled that when the COA was considered for an affordable housing site, she was able to contact seniors. Ms. Lawton decided to write an article in the newsletter asking seniors if they were interested in making Hamilton an age-friendly community. Darcy Dale suggested filing a Citizen's Petition. Phil Stearns said the Town Manager could be approached once the newsletter was issued asking him what he thought

of the topic. Ms. Lawton would hold a presentation with someone from the State and someone from the Alzheimer's Association. Information regarding the presentation could be placed in the Chronicle as well. The Selectmen and Town Manager would be invited to the presentation. The number of seniors would be included in the article.

Mary Beth Lawton noted that Martha Hale Farrell had found four people agreeing to be on the Friends of the Council on Aging group.

Discussion of BOS/FinCom Joint Meeting,

While some members recalled the budget increase would be about 2 to 3% for the next year, Nick Tensen noted that he heard the Town Manager list other items that would increase the budget. Mary Beth Lawton said that Department Heads were told to keep their budgets to bare bones. David Wanger was concerned that the By-laws specified that the FinCom should have been involved in formulating guidance, but they have not been. Phil Stearns thought it was a legitimate concern but timing might have been an issue to give Department Heads time to work on their budgets. Departmental reviews would occur on December 10th through the 13th with the FinCom invited. Mr. Wanger said the consensus had been that budget asks for the Schools would be consolidated in a letter but if it had only recently been submitted so the Schools they could respond that they just received the letter and were unable to discuss the topic. Mr. Stearns responded that the Schools had been contacted and the two Towns were in sync. As Wenham's reasonable agenda had been filed, the FinCom would adopt the same agenda for consistency.

Discussion of Strategy with Regard to the Joint HWRSD/BOS/FinCom meeting with Hamilton and Wenham.

Item 1 and 2 were overviews from Hamilton and Wenham regarding each town's FY20 budget parameters, drivers, pricing issues, fiscal challenges, opportunities, and capital needs. Item 3 was the overview from the School leadership regarding vision plans, pressing issues, budget parameters, and capital needs for FY20. Both towns would be in sync. It was unclear if the ask letter had been delivered to the Schools to date. John Pruellage and Joe Domelowicz were to refine the list. Mr. Pruellage had refined the list, which was presented to Mr. Domelowicz by Phil Stearns. It was agreed that the Wenham agenda was not perfect but would address topics broadly enough. Mr. Stearns said the asks were not defined in the agenda but could be brought up by the Town Manager. Mr. Pruellage added that Gene Lee (HWRSD committee member) was at a previous meeting and was given the list.

The Schools had not posted the meeting and it was presumed that they might not talk

during the meeting. Nick Tensen hoped they would discuss the special needs initiative that increased the budget. Mr. Stearns did not think they would discuss the topic. David Wanger said he had hoped the asks were sent early enough that when the Schools did not respond to them, they would not have a chance to say it was because they had just received the list. As the list was only recently sent, that opportunity had been weakened. Mr. Stearns said the budget was not due until April, so discussion could be conducted at the January meeting. This meeting was to outline what the Towns wanted to see in the Schools' budget such as an update on the special needs initiative and capital needs.

An e-mail would be sent to the Schools' with copies to School administration, Shawn Farrell and Joe Domelowicz. The e-mail would request the Schools address the asks early as well as providing an update on the special needs initiative if not at the December meeting, then at the next meeting. The e-mail would include key issues. David Wanger worried that the process was the same year after year with the School not participating. Phil Stearns mentioned that the entire Board of Selectmen might not attend the meeting. It was agreed that the meeting was a FinCom initiative. Joe Domelowicz would be making the presentation but the FinCom was unaware what the presentation might look like. Mr. Wanger hoped the FinCom would have a chance to review the presentation. Mr. Stearns would ask for a copy of the presentation and send it to FinCom members. Comments regarding the presentation should be sent directly to the Town Manager to avoid a conflict to the Open Meeting Law.

The teacher's rate increase was not announced even though once ratified, a contract was of the public domain, according to David Wanger. The implications were that it was a 2.5% increase with fringe benefits related to obtaining a higher degree. It was too early to ask the Schools to stay within a specific percentage. It was agreed that by the next meeting, the FinCom would know the target increase. Phil Stearns thought the Schools should try to live within the same bounds. The Town had experienced a 1% increase the previous year while the Schools experienced a 5.6% increase, according to Mr. Stearns. Nick Tensen said the 2.5% to 3% was not a bad goal for operating expenses, which did not include capital items. Phil Stearns said debt payments were a separate line but the 5.6% increase included debt payments. The bond was separate but the debt payments become part of the operating budget. David Wanger suggested being careful what the FinCom told the Schools when it was unclear what was expected of the Town. John Pruellage suggested that the Town would look at the global budget factor in COLAs and reserves for collective bargaining, trash, and healthcare. When all those were factored in, it would be close to 2.5% to 3% without much discretionary spending.

Phil Stearns would ask Joe Domelowicz for a copy of the Department Head letter and ask

if there was a target set. If there was a target set, Mr. Stearns would put it in the letter to the School Committee Chairman with a copy to the School administration (Jeff Sands), Joe Domelowicz and the Board of Selectmen. The letter would include the asks. The Wenham agenda would be copied and posted.

Committee member reports on Liaison Assignments and Other Projects.

Phil Stearns announced that the Town Hall Building Committee had received 13 or 14 architect proposals and had an Owners Project Manager (OPM). Three finalists had been selected with Lerner, Lads, Bartels being unanimously chosen to negotiate a contract. The company had a good recommendation from the OPM. Mike Toomey (building committee) checked their references. The firm would start doing an exploration/extensive survey of the existing building including the foundation, septic, and structure. The budget for the architects would be part of the negotiation process. Money had been approved by the Community Preservation Committee for the initial phase but not for the architects. The firm had a history of coming to Spring Town Meetings to present designs budgets, etc.

Review and Approve Minutes if available.

Motion made by Darcy Dale to approve the minutes of October 17, 2018.

Seconded by David Wanger.

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Other Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair.

Discuss/Determine Agenda for the Next Meeting.

The next meeting would be December 12, 2018 and would include a follow up to the Schools meeting, updates on budget discussions, and OPEB irrevocable trust discussions with Marisa Batista. The resource officer would also be discussed. Ms. Batista had distributed the law regarding the Resource officer but it was noted that the Town was allowed to petition not to have one and that a child therapist or guidance counselor could be used instead of an armed policeman, according to Darcy Dale. Nick Tensen asked if it was duplicative of school counselors. Phil Stearns said part of the need was due to Chief Stevens understanding that if something were to happen in town, it might have been prevented by the resource officer. Ms. Dale said it was an extreme overreaction. Mr. Tensen added that due to communications, everyone knew what was happening everywhere.

Adjournment

John Pruellage made motion to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Darcy Dale.

Vote Unanimous to adjourn at 8:47 pm.

Prepared by:

Marcie Ricker

Darcy Dale 01-11-19

Attest

Date